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THE LIFEBOAT
AND
OTHER POEMS

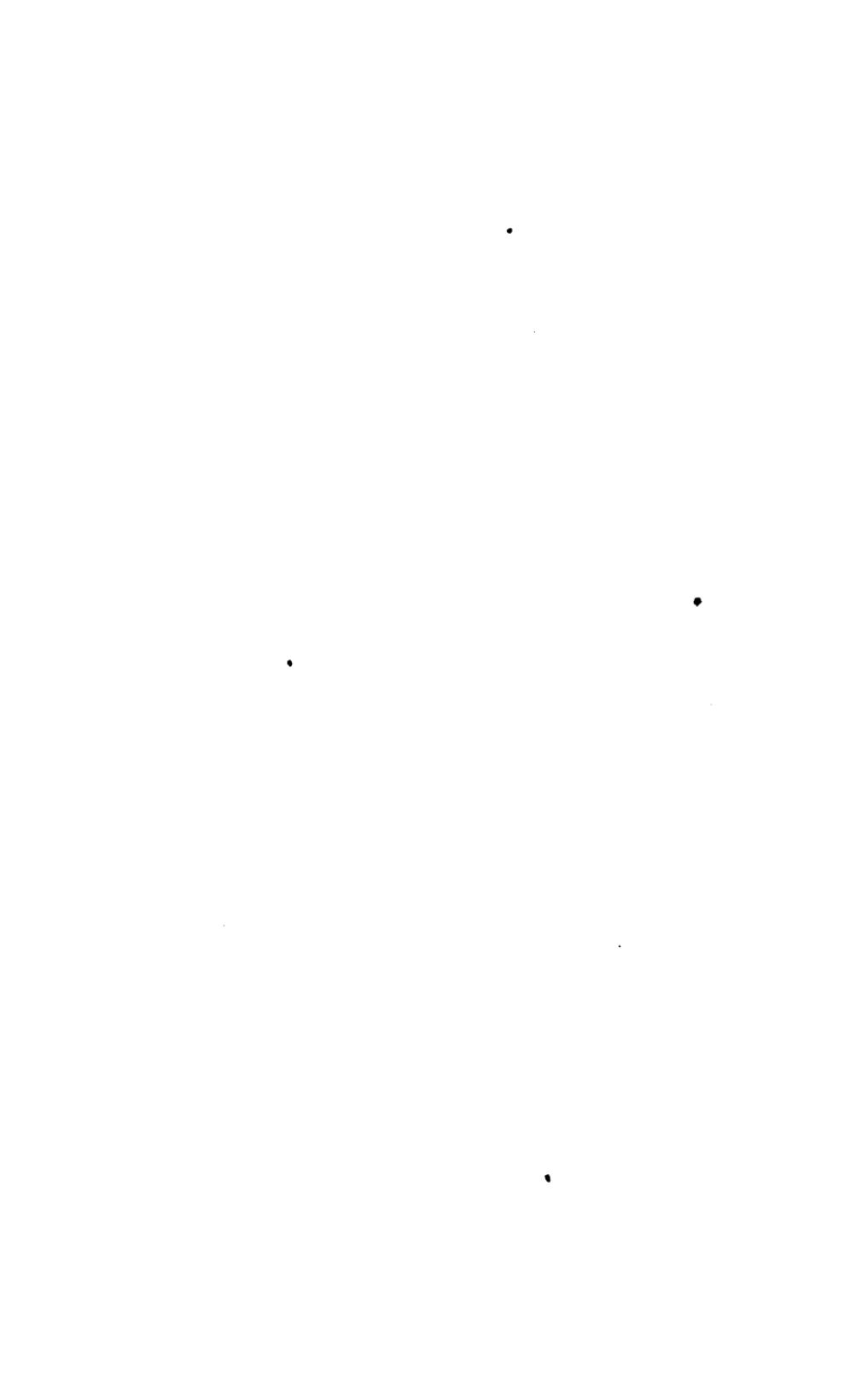
GEORGE R. SIMS.



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THE LIFEBOAT AND OTHER POEMS.



THE LIFEBOAT

AND

OTHER POEMS.

BY

GEORGE R. SIMS.

*AUTHOR OF "THE DAGONET BALLADS,"
"BALLADS OF BABYLON," &c.*

LONDON:

J. P. FULLER, WINE OFFICE COURT, E.C.

1883.

280 . 0 . 906 .



To WILSON BARRETT, Esq.,

*These Poems, mostly melodramatic, are dedicated,
with the Author's sincere admiration for one who
has done so much both as Manager and Actor for
the Poetry of Melodrama.*

January 1st, 1883.



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THE LIFEBOAT

AND

OTHER POEMS.

THE LIFEBOAT.

BEEN out in the lifeboat often? Ay, ay, sir,
oft enough.
When it's rougher than this? Lor' bless
you! this ain't what *we* calls rough!
It's when there's a gale a-blowin', and the waves run
in and break
On the shore with a roar like thunder and the white
cliffs seem to shake;

B

When the sea is a hell of waters, and the bravest
holds his breath
As he hears the cry for the lifeboat—his summons
maybe to death—
That's when we call it rough, sir; but, if we can get
her afloat,
There's always enough brave fellows ready to man
the boat.

You've heard of the Royal Helen, the ship as was
wrecked last year?
Yon be the rock she struck on—the boat as went
out be here;
The night as she struck was reckoned the worst as
ever we had,
And this is a coast in winter where the weather be
awful bad.
The beach here was strewed with wreckage, and to
tell you the truth, sir, then
Was the only time as ever we'd a bother to get the
men.
The single chaps was willin', and six on 'em volun-
teered,
But most on us here is married, and the wives that
night was skeered.

Our women ain't chicken-hearted when it comes to
savin' lives,
But death that night looked certain—and our wives
be only wives ;
Their lot ain't bright at the best, sir ; but here,
when the man lies dead,
'Tain't only a husband missin', it's the children's
daily bread ;
So our women began to whimper and beg o' the
chaps to stay—
I only heerd on it after, for that night I was kept
away.
I was up at my cottage, yonder, where the wife lay
nigh her end,
She'd been ailin' all the winter, and nothin' 'ud
make her mend.

The doctor had given her up, sir, and I knelt by her
side and prayed,
With my eyes as red as a babby's, that Death's
hand might yet be stayed.
I heerd the wild wind howlin', and I looked on the
wasted form,
And thought of the awful shipwreck as had come in
the ragin' storm ;

The wreck of my little homestead—the wreck of my
dear old wife,
Who'd sailed with me forty years, sir, o'er the
troublous waves of life,
And I looked at the eyes so sunken, as had been
my harbour lights,
To tell of the sweet home haven in the wildest,
darkest nights.

She knew she was sinkin' quickly—she knew as her
end was nigh,
But she never spoke o' the troubles as I knew on
her heart must lie,
For we'd had one great big sorrow with Jack, our
only son—
He'd got into trouble in London, as lots o' the lads
ha' done ;
Then he'd bolted, his masters told us—he was allus
what folk call wild.
From the day as I told his mother, her dear face
never smiled.
We heerd no more about him, we never knew
where he went,
And his mother pined and sickened for the message
he never sent.

I had my work to think of; but she had her grief
to nurse,
So it eat away at her heartstrings, and her health
grew worse and worse.
And the night as the Royal Helen went down on
yonder sands,
I sat and watched her dyin', holdin' her wasted
hands.
She moved in her doze a little, then her eyes were
opened wide,
And she seemed to be seekin' somethin', as she
looked from side to side;
Then half to herself she whispered, "Where's Jack,
to say good-bye?
It's hard not to see my darlin', and kiss him afore I
die!"

I was stoopin' to kiss and soothe her, while the
tears ran down my cheek,
And my lips were shaped to whisper the words I
couldn't speak,
When the door of the room burst open, and my
mates were there outside
With the news that the boat was launchin'.
"You're wanted!" their leader cried.

“ You’ve never refused to go, John ; you’ll put these cowards right.

There’s a dozen of lives maybe, John, as lie in our hands to-night ! ”

’Twas old Ben Brown, the captain ; he’d laughed at the women’s doubt.

We’d always been first on the beach, sir, when the boat was goin’ out.

I didn’t move, but I pointed to the white face on the bed—

“ I can’t go, mate,” I murmured ; “ in an hour she may be dead.

I cannot go and leave her to die in the night alone.”

As I spoke Ben raised his lantern, and the light on my wife was thrown ;

And I saw her eyes fixed strangely with a pleading look on me,

While a tremblin’ finger pointed through the door to the ragin’ sea.

Then she beckoned me near, and whispered, “ Go, and God’s will be done ! ”

For every lad on that ship, John, is some poor mother’s son.”

Her head was full of the boy, sir—she was thinking,
maybe, some day

For lack of a hand to help him his life might be cast
away.

“Go, John, and the Lord watch o'er you ! and
spare me to see the light,

And bring you safe,” she whispered, “out of the
storm to-night.”

Then I turned and kissed her softly, and tried to
hide my tears,

And my mates outside, when they saw me, set up
three hearty cheers ;

But I rubbed my eyes wi' my knuckles, and turned
to old Ben and said,

“I'll see her again, maybe, lad, when the sea gives
up its dead.”

We launched the boat in the tempest, though death
was the goal in view,

And never a one but doubted if the craft could live
it through ;

But our boat she stood it bravely, and, weary and
wet and weak,

We drew in hail of the vessel we had dared so
much to seek.

But just as we come upon her she gave a fearful roll,
And went down in the seethin' whirlpool with every livin' soul !
We rowed for the spot, and shouted, for all around was dark—
But only the wild wind answered the cries from our plungin' bark.

I was strainin' my eyes and watchin', when I thought I heard a cry,
And I saw past our bows a somethin' on the crest of a wave dashed by ;
I stretched out my hand to seize it. I dragged it aboard, and then
I stumbled, and struck my forrud, and fell like a log on Ben.
I remember a hum of voices, and then I knowed no more
Till I came to my senses here, sir—here, in my home ashore.
My forrud was tightly bandaged, and I lay on my little bed—
I'd slipped, so they told me arter, and a rulluck had struck my head.

Then my mates came in and whispered ; they'd
heard I was comin' round.

At first I could scarcely hear 'em, it seemed like a
buzzin' sound ;

But as soon as my head got clearer, and accustomed
to hear 'em speak,

I knew as I'd lain like that, sir, for many a long,
long week.

I guessed what the lads was hidin', for their poor
old shipmate's sake.

I could see by their puzzled faces they'd got some
news to break ;

So I lifts my head from the pillow, and I says to old
Ben, "Look here !

I'm able to bear it now, lad—tell me, and never
fear."

Not one on 'em ever answered, but presently Ben
goes out,

And the others slinks away like, and I says, "What's
this about ?

Why can't they tell me plainly as the poor old wife
is dead ?"

Then I fell again on the pillows, and I hid my achin'
head ;

I lay like that for a minute, till I heard a voice cry
"John!"
And I thought it must be a vision as my weak eyes
gazed upon;
For there by the bedside, standin' up and well was
my wife.
And who do ye think was with her? Why, Jack,
as large as life.

It was him as I'd saved from drownin' the night as
the lifeboat went
To the wreck of the Royal Helen; 'twas that as the
vision meant.
They'd brought us ashore together, he'd knelt by his
mother's bed,
And the sudden joy had raised her like a miracle
from the dead;
And mother and son together had nursed me back
to life,
And my old eyes woke from darkness to look on my
son and wife.
Jack? He's our right hand now, sir; 'twas Prov-
idence pulled him through—
He's allus the first aboard her when the lifeboat
wants a crew.



THE MAGIC WAND.

A SCHOOL BOARD OFFICER'S STORY.



ORRIBLE dens, sir, aren't they?

This is one of my daily rounds
It's here, in these awful places,
That child-life most abounds.

We ferret from roof to basement
In search of our tiny prey ;
We're down on their homes directly
If they happen to stop away.



Knock at the door ! Pooh, nonsense !
They wouldn't know what it meant.
Come in and look about you ;
They'll think you're a School Board gent.
Did you ever see such hovels ?
Dirty, and damp, and small.
Look at the rotten flooring,
Look at the filthy wall.

That's lucky—the place is empty,
The whole of the family's out.
This is one of my fav'rite cases :
Just give a glance about.
There's a father and four young children,
And Sally the eldest's eight ;
They're horribly poor—half-starving—
And they live in a shocking state.

The father gets drunk and beats them,
The mother she died last year :
There's a story about her dying
I fancy you'd like to hear.
She was one of our backward pupils,
Was Sally the eldest child—
A poor little London blossom
The alley had not defiled.

She was on at the Lane last winter—
She played in the pantomime ;
A lot of our School Board children
Get on at the Christmas time.
She was one of a group of fairies,
And her wand was the wand up there—
There, in the filthy corner
Behind the broken chair.

The gilt of the star has faded,
And the tinsel's peeled away ;
But once, in the glaring lime-light,
It gleamed like a jewelled spray.
A fairy's wand in a lodging
In a slum like this looks queer ;
But you'll guess why they let her keep it
When you know how the wand came here.

Her mother was ill that winter,
Her father, the drunken sot,
Was spending his weekly earnings
And all that the fairy got.
The woman lay sick and moaning,
Dying by slow degrees
Of a cruel and wasting fever
That rages in dens like these.

But night after night went Sally,
Half starved, to the splendid scene
Where she waved a wand of magic
As a Liliput fairy queen.
She stood in the " Land of Shadows "
Where a demon worked his spell,
At a wave of her wand he vanished,
And the scene was changed as well.

She'd a couple of lines to utter,
Which bade the gloom give way
To the "Golden Home of Blisses
In the Land of the Shining Day."
She gazed on the limelit splendours
That grew as she waved her wand,
And she thought of the cheerless cellar
Old Drury's walls beyond.

And when, in her ragged garments,
No longer a potent fay,
She knelt by the wretched pallet
Where her dying mother lay.
She thought, as she stooped and kissed her,
And looked in the ghastly face,
Of the wand that could change a dungeon
To a sweet and lovely place.

She was only a wretched outcast,
A waif of the London slums ;
It's little of truth and knowledge
To the ears of such children comes.
She fancied her wand was truly
Possessed of a magic charm,
That it punished the wicked people,
And shielded the good from harm.

Her mother grew slowly weaker,
The depth of the winter came,
And the teeth of the biting weather
Seized on the wasted frame.
And Sally, who saw her sinking,
Came home from the Lane one night
With her shawl wrapped over something,
And her face a ghostly white.

She had hidden the wand and brought it,
The wand that could do so much ;
She crept to the sleeping woman,
Who moved not at her touch.
She stooped to hear her breathing,
It was, O, so faint and low ;
Then, raising her wand, she waved it,
Like a fairy, to and fro.

Her well-known lines she uttered,
That bade the gloom give way
To "The Golden Home of Blisses
In the Land of Shining Day."
She murmured, "O mother, dearest,
You shall look on the splendid scene!"
While a man from the playhouse watched her
Who'd followed the fairy queen.

He thought she had stolen something,
And brought it away to sell,
He had followed her home and caught her
And then he'd a tale to tell.
He told how he watched her waving
The wand by her mother's bed,
O'er a face where the faint grey shadows
Of the last long sleep had spread.

* * * *

She's still at the school, is Sally,
And she's heard of the Realms of Light;
So she clings to the childish fancy
That entered her head that night.
She says that her poor sick mother
By her wand was charmed away
From earth to the Home of Blisses
In the Land of Eternal Day.





A BUNCH OF PRIMROSES.



AM only a faded primrose, dying for want
of air;
I and my drooping sisters lie in a garret
bare.

We were plucked from the pleasant woodland only
a week ago,
But our leaves have lost their beauty, and our heads
are bending low.

We grew in a yellow cluster under a shady tree,
In a spot where the winds came wooing straight
from the Sussex sea;
And the brisk breeze kissed us boldly as we nodded
to and fro
In the smiling April weather—only a week ago.

Only a week this morning ! Ah, me ! but it seems
a year

Since the only dew on our petals was a woman's
briny tear ;

Since the breeze and the merry sunshine were
changed for this stifling gloom

And the soot of the smoky chimneys that robs us of
our bloom.

We grew in a nook so quiet, behind a hedge so
high ;

We were hid from the peeping children who, laugh-
ing, passed us by.

But a primrose gatherer spied us—his cruel hand
came down ;

We were plucked in the early morning and packed
and sent to town.

We were tossed in a busy market from grimy hand
to hand,

'Till a great rough woman took us, and hawked us
about the Strand ;

Clutched in her dirty fingers our tender stalks were
tied,

And "A penny a bunch, who'll buy 'em ?—fine
primroses !" she cried.

We lay on the woman's basket till a white-faced
girl came past;
There was, O, such a world of yearning in the
lingering look she cast—
Cast on the tumbled bunches—a look that seemed
to say,
“O, if I only had you!”—but she sighed and
she turned away.

She was only gone for a moment, and then she was
back again;
She'd the look on her pale, pinched features that
told of the hunger pain;
She held in her hand the penny that ought to have
bought her bread,
But she dropped it into the basket and took us
home instead.

Home—how we seemed to wither, as the light of
day grew dim,
And up to a London garret she bore us with weary
limb!
But her clasp it was kind and gentle, and there
shone a light in her eyes
That made us think for a moment we were under
our native skies.

She stole in the room on tiptoe, and "Alice," she softly said,
"See what I've brought you, Alice!" Then a sick girl raised her head,
And a faint voice answered, "Darling, how kind of you to bring
The flowers I love so dearly—I've longed for them all the spring.

"I've thought of it so often, the green bank far away,
And the posies we used to gather—it seems but the other day;
Lay them beside my pillow, they'll last as long as I—
How quickly in cruel London the country blossoms die!"

We pined in our gloomy prison, and we thought how sweet we were
Blooming among the hedgerows out in the balmy air,
Where we gladdened the eyes that saw us all in our yellow pride,
And we thought how our lives were wasted as we lay by a sick bedside.

We thought how our lives were wasted until we
grew to know
We were dear to the dying workgirl for the sake of
the long ago ;
That her anguish was half forgotten as she looked
upon us and went
Back in her dreams to the woodland filled with the
primrose scent.

We primroses are dying, and so is Alice, fast ;
But her sister sits beside her, watching her to the
last,
Working with swollen eyelids for the white slave's
scanty wage,
And starving to save her darling and to still the
fever's rage.

We stand on the little table beside the sick girl's
bed,
And we know by the words she murmurs that she
wanders in her head ;
She stretches her hand to take us, and laughs like a
child at play—
She thinks that she sees us growing on the old bank
far away.

Forgotten the gloomy garret, the fierce and the
fevered strife—

Forgotten the weary journey that is ending with
her life;

The black, black night has vanished, and the weary
workgirl hies

Back to her country childhood, plucking a primrose-
prize.

We have banished awhile her sorrow, we have
brought back the sunny smile

That belongs to the children's faces in the days that
are free from guile.

The Babylon roar comes floating up from the street
below:

Yet she lists to the gentle plashing of a brook in its
spring-tide flow.

The gurgling brook in the meadow, with its prim-
rose-laden brim—

How thick were the yellow clusters on the bank
where she sat with him!

With him who had loved and lost her, who had
trampled a blossom down.

Ah, me! for the country blossoms brought to the
cruel town!

Thank God for the good brave sister who found the
lost one there ;
Who toiled with her for the pittance that paid for
that garret bare ;
Who slaved when the wasted fingers grew all too
weak to sew,
And hid all her troubles bravely that Alice might
never know.

We have brought one country sunbeam to shine in
that garret bare ;
But to-morrow will see us lifeless—killed by the
poisoned air.
Then the primrose dream will vanish, and Alice will
ask in vain
For the poor little yellow posy that made her a
child again.

* * * *

On to our faded petals there falls a scalding tear ;
As we lie to-night on the bosom of her who held us
dear.
We shall go to the grave together—for the work-
girl lies at rest,
With a faded primrose posy clasped to her icy
breast.



NELLIE'S PRAYER.



T'S a month to-day since they brought me
The news of my darling's death;
I knew what it meant when the neighbours
Whispered under their breath;
And one good motherly creature,
Seeing my Nell at play,
Stooped down, with her eyelids streaming
And kissed her and turned away.

I knew that my Nell was an orphan
And I was a widowed wife,
That a soldier for Queen and country
Had bravely given his life;
That out on the field of battle,
Under the far-off skies,
He had thought of his absent dear ones
With the film of death on his eyes.

It was there in the evening paper,
His name was among the dead—
We had won a glorious battle,
And the enemy, beaten, fled.
Then they counted the dead and wounded,
And found him among the slain ;
O God ! had I known when we parted
We were never to meet again !

I couldn't believe the story—
I couldn't believe that he,
My darling—my soldier husband—
Would never come back to me.
I had thought of him night and morning ;
I had passed long nights on my knees
Praying that God would bring him
Back to me over the seas.

It all came back like a vision ;
I could hear the band as it played
When the regiment marched to the station,
And the noise that the people made
As they shouted "Good luck" to the soldiers,
And gave them three ringing cheers,
While the women, with ashen faces,
Walked by the side in tears.

We walked by *his* side that morning,
And Nellie was quite elate
With the band and the crowd and the cheering—
My Nellie was only eight.
She never thought of the danger ;
He had tried to make her gay,
And told her to take care of mother—
He wouldn't be long away.

He held her up at the station,
Lifted her up to kiss,
And then, with her arms flung round him,
Said to her, softly, this :
“ Nellie, my pet, at bed time,
When you kneel at your mother's knee
To pray to the God who loves us,
Say a wee prayer for me.

“ I shall think of you in the twilight,
When the stars come out above,
And fancy I see you kneeling
With your blue eye full of love,
Breathing my name to Heaven ;
And if, as the good folks say,
God hears the prayers of the children,
He'll guard me while I'm away.

“ He’ll guard me, and bring me safely
Back, little Nell, to you :
There’s many a danger, darling,
He’ll have to help me through.”
And the child looked up at her father,
The tears in her pretty eyes ;
There was something of shame in her manner—
Something of sad surprise.

“ You needn’t have asked me, daddy,
I always do that ! ” she said ;
“ Don’t I pray for you and for mammy
At night when I go to bed ?
God loves the little children,
And answers their prayers, they say ;
I’m sure that you’ll come back safely,
I’ll ask in my prayers that you may.”

It’s only a month since they started.
We thought when the regiment went
That long ere the troops were landed
The force of the war would be spent.
And so I had taken courage,
And looked on the bright side first,
Though now and again I fretted,
And sometimes feared the worst.

They took little Nellie from me,
 Took her away for a while ;
How could I hear her prattle,
 And watch her eager smile,
As she counted the days till daddy
 Would be back from the foreign shore ?
How could I tell my darling
 She would see his face no more ?

I was left alone with my sorrow—
 Alone in my little room,
Where the evening shadows deepened
 Into the twilight gloom.
I had heard the words they uttered,
 I had seen his name on the list ;
But I sat and peered through the darkness
 As a sailor peers through the mist

I sat like a sleeper doubting
 If she dreams or is wide awake,
Till the truth came on me fiercely,
 And I thought that my heart would break.
As I sat in the deepening gloaming
 The child came back again,
And I picked her up and kissed her
 While my tears ran down like rain.

“Why are you crying, mammy ?”
I only shook my head.
“It’s nothing, Nellie,” I whispered ;
“Kiss me, and go to bed.”
“Let me say my prayers, mammy—
Will you hear me say them now ?”
She prayed for her absent father ;
I listened, but God knows how.

She prayed to the Lord to bring him,
Safe and sound and well,
Back from the far-off country
To mother and little Nell—
Prayed *that*, with her father lying
In that far-off country dead !
“Now, father’s safe till to-morrow,”
She whispered, and went to bed.

I hadn’t the heart to tell her,
So night after night she prayed,
Just as she promised her father
When the last good-bye he bade.
But the prayer was a cruel dagger
To me as I sat and heard,
And my heart was stabbed to bleeding
With every childish word.

So a weary month went over,
Till at last my nerves gave way,
And I told her to stop one evening,
As she came to my knee to pray.
My brain was turned with sorrow,
I was wicked and weak and wild
To speak as I spoke that evening,
And shock the faith of a child.

She heard what I said ; then, sobbing,
Broke from my knee and fled
Up to her room, and I heard her
Kneeling beside her bed.
She prayed in her childish fashion,
But her words were choked with tears—
I had told her it wasn't always
God the prayer of the children hears

She prayed that her absent father
Might come back safe and well,
From the perils of war and battle,
To mother and little Nell.
And, ere ever her prayer was finished,
The door was opened wide,
And my darling rushed towards me—
My darling who had died !

I gave one cry and I fainted,
And Nell ran down at the cry:
"They said God wouldn't hear me,"
She told him by-and-by.
When the shock of surprise was over
We knew what the miracle meant,
There'd been a mistake in the bodies,
And the news to the wrong wife sent.

There were two of his name in the regiment—
The other was killed, and when
It came to making the list out
An error was made in the men.
Yet I think as I clasp my darling,
Would he still be here to-day
Had I shaken Nell's simple tenet,
"God listens when children pray"?





IN THE SIGNAL BOX.

A STATIONMASTER'S STORY.



ES, it's a quiet station, but it suits me well enough;

I want a bit of the smooth now, for I've had my share o' rough.

This berth that the company gave me, they gave as the work was light;

I was never fit for the signals after one awful night.

I'd been in the box from a younker, and I'd never felt the strain

Of the lives at my right hand's mercy in every passing train.

One day there was something happened, and it made my nerves go queer,

And it's all through that as you find me the station-master here.

I was on at the box down yonder—that's where we
turn the mails,
And specials, and fast expresses, on to the centre
rails ;
The side's for the other traffic—the luggage and
local slows.
It was rare hard work at Christmas, when double
the traffic grows.
I've been in the box down yonder nigh sixteen
hours a day, •
Till my eyes grew dim and heavy, and my thoughts
went all astray ;
But I've worked the points half-sleeping—and once
I slept outright,
Till the roar of the Limited woke me, and I nearly
died with fright.

Then I thought of the lives in peril, and what might
have been their fate
Had I sprung to the points that evening a tenth of
a tick too late ;
And a cold and ghastly shiver ran icily through my
frame
As I fancied the public clamour, the trial, and
bitter shame.

I could see the bloody wreckage—I could see the
mangled slain—
And the picture was seared for ever, blood-red, on
my heated brain.
That moment my nerve was shattered, for I couldn't
shut out the thought
Of the lives I held in my keeping, and the ruin that
might be wrought.

That night in our little cottage, as I kissed our
sleeping child,
My wife looked up from her sewing, and told me,
as she smiled,
That Johnny had made his mind up—he'd be a
pointsman too.
“He says when he's big, like daddy, he'll work in
the box with you.”
I frowned, for my heart was heavy, and my wife
she saw the look;
Lord bless you! my little Alice could read me like
a book.
I'd to tell her of what had happened, and I said that
I must leave,
For a pointsman's arm ain't trusty when terror lurks
in his sleeve.

But she cheered me up in a minute, and that night,
ere we went to sleep,
She made me give her a promise, which I swore
that I'd always keep—
It was always to do my duty. “Do that, and then,
come what will,
You'll have no worry,” said Alice, “if things go
well or ill.
There's something that always tells us the thing that
we ought to do”—
My wife was a bit religious, and in with the chapel
crew.
But I knew she was talking reason, and I said to
myself, says I,
“I won't give in like a coward—it's a scare that'll
soon go by.”

Now, the very next day the missus had to go to the
market town ;
She'd the Christmas things to see to, and she wanted
to buy a gown.
She'd be gone for a spell, for the party didn't come
back till eight,
And I knew, on a Christmas Eve, too, the trains
would be extra late.

So she settled to leave me Johnny, and then she
could turn the key—
For she'd have some parcels to carry, and the boy
would be safe with me.
He was five was our little Johnny, and quiet, and
nice, and good—
He was mad to go with daddy, and I'd often
promised he should.

It was noon when the missus started—her train
went by my box ;
She could see, as she passed my window, her dar-
ling's curly locks.
I lifted him up to mammy, and he kissed his little
hand,
Then sat, like a mouse, in the corner, and thought
it was fairyland.
But somehow I fell a-thinking of a scene that would
not fade,
Of how I had slept on duty, until I grew afraid ;
For the thought would weigh upon me, one day I
might come to lie
In a felon's cell for the slaughter of those I had
doomed to die.

The fit that had come upon me, like a hideous
nightmare seemed,
Till I rubbed my eyes and started like a sleeper
who has dreamed.
For a time the box had vanished—I'd worked like
a mere machine—
My mind had been on the wander, and I'd neither
heard nor seen.
With a start I thought of Johnny, and I turned the
boy to seek,
Then I uttered a groan of anguish, for my lips re-
fused to speak ;
There had flashed such a scene of horror swift on
my startled sight
That it curdled my blood in terror and sent my red
lips white.

It was all in one awful moment—I saw that the boy
was lost :
He had gone for a toy, I fancied, some child from a
train had tossed ;
The local was easing slowly to stop at the station
here,
And the Limited Mail was coming, and I had the
line to clear.

I could hear the roar of the engine, I could almost
feel its breath,
And right on the centre metals stood my boy in the
jaws of death;
On came the fierce fiend, tearing straight for the
centre line,
And the hand that must wreck or save it, O merciful
God, was mine !

'Twas a hundred lives or Johnny's. O Heaven !
what could I do ?—
Up to God's ear that moment a wild, fierce question
flew—
“ What shall I do, O Heaven ? ” and sudden and
loud and clear
On the wind came the words, “ Your duty, ” borne
to my listening ear.
Then I set my teeth, and my breathing was fierce
and short and quick.
“ My boy ! ” I cried, but he heard not ; and then I
went blind and sick ;
The hot black smoke of the engine came with a
rush before,
I turned the mail to the centre, and by it flew with
a roar.

Then I sank on my knees in horror, and hid my
ashen face—

I had given my child to Heaven ; his life was a
hundred's grace.

Had I held my hand a moment, I had hurled the
flying mail

To shatter the creeping local that stood on the
other rail !

Where is my boy, my darling ? O God ! let me
hide my eyes.

How can I look—his father—on that which there
mangled lies ?

That voice !—O merciful Heaven !—'tis the child's,
and he calls my name !

I hear, but I cannot see him, for my eyes are filled
with flame.

I knew no more that night, sir, for I fell, as I heard
the boy ;

The place reeled round, and I fainted—swooned
with the sudden joy.

But I heard on the Christmas morning, when I woke
in my own warm bed,

With Alice's arms around me, and a strange wild
dream in my head,

That she'd come by the early local, being anxious
about the lad,
And had seen him there on the metals, and the
sight nigh drove her mad—
She had seen him just as the engine of the Limited
closed my view,
And she'd leapt on the line and saved him just as
the mail dashed through.

She was back in the train in a second, and both
were safe and sound—
The moment they stopped at the station she ran
here, and I was found
With my eyes like a madman's glaring, and my face
a ghastly white :
I heard the boy, and I fainted, and I hadn't my wits
that night.
Who told me to do my duty? What voice was that
on the wind?
Was it fancy that brought it to me? or were there
God's lips behind?
If I hadn't a-done my duty—had I ventured to dis-
obey—
My bonny boy and his mother might have died by
my hand that day.



TICKET-O'-LEAVE.

A VILLAGE DRAMA.

WHO'S getting married this morning? Some o' the big folks? No! Leastways, not as you'd call such as nowadays big folks go.
It's only a common wedding—old Bradley's daughter Eve
Is a-saying "I will" in yonder, and the bridegroom's
"Ticket-o'-Leave."

You thought 'twas a big folk's wedding because o' the crowd, maybe;
Well, it's one as the whole o' the village has come to the church to see.
You needn't say you're a stranger—if you wasn't you'd know their tale,
For to find another as didn't you might search ten mile and fail.

“Ticket-o'-Leave,” did I call him? I did, sir, and
all round here
“Ticket-o'-Leave” we’ve called him for as nigh as
maybe a year;
For he came back here from a prison—this is his
native place,
And that was the gibe as his neighbours flung in his
haggard face.

Eve was the village beauty, with half the lads at her
feet;
But she only gave ‘em the chaff, sir—it was Ned as
got all the wheat.
They were sweethearts trothed and plighted, for old
Bradley was nothing loth—
He had kissed the girl when she told him, and
promised to help them both.

But Jack, his son, was his idol—a rackety, scape-
grace lad;
Though to speak e’er a word agin him was to drive
the old chap mad.
He worshipped the boy—God help him!—the dearest
to him on earth:
The wife of his early manhood had died in giving
him birth.

To him Jack was just an angel ; but over the village
ale

The gossips who knew his capers could tell a
different tale.

There were whispers of more than folly—of drink-
ing bouts and of debt,

And of company Jack was keeping into which it
was bad to get.

Ned heard it all at the alehouse, smoking his pipe
one night,

And he struck his fist on the table, and gave it them
left and right ;

He said it was lies, and dared them to breathe a
word 'gin the lad—

He feared it might reach the farmer ; but Ned knew
as the boy was bad.

Old Bradley was weak and ailing, the doctor had
whispered Ned

That a sudden shock would kill him—that he held
his life by a thread.

So that made Ned more than anxious to keep the
slanders back

That were running rife in the village about the
scapegrace Jack.

One night—I shall ne'er forget it, for it came like
a thunderclap—
The news came into the village as they'd found a
pedlar chap
Smothered in blood and senseless, shot and robbed
on the green,
And they brought Ned back here handcuffed two
constables between.

At first we couldn't believe it, not as he could ha'
been the man,
But one of our chaps had caught him just as he
turned and ran—
Had caught Ned there red-handed, with a gun and
the pedlar's gold,
And we went in a crowd to the station, where the
rest of the tale was told.

The facts agin Ned were damning. When they
got the pedlar round
His wound was probed, and a bullet that fitted Ned's
gun was found.
He'd been shot from behind a hedgerow, and had
fallen and swooned away,
And Ned must have searched his victim and have
robbed him as he lay.

They kept it back from the farmer, who had taken
at last to his bed :

Eve came, red-eyed, and told him that she'd had a
quarrel with Ned,

And he'd gone away and had left them, and p'r'aps
he wouldn't come back —

Old Bradley said he was sorry, then asked for his
boy, his Jack.

And Jack, white-faced and trembling, he crept to
his father's side,

And was scarcely away from the homestead till after
the old man died.

On the night that death crossed the threshold one
last, long, lingering look

At the face that was his dead darling's the poor old
farmer took.

As the shadows of twilight deepened the long ago
came back,

And his weak voice faintly whispered, "Lean over
and kiss me, Jack ;

Let me take your kiss to Heaven, to the mother who
died for you."

And Eve sobbed out as she heard him, "Thank
God, he never knew!"

In his lonely cell a felon heard of the old man's
end
In a letter his faithful sweetheart had conquered her
grief to send ;
And the load of his pain was lightened as he thought
of what might have been
Had Jack and not he been taken that night upon
Parson's Green.

Five years went over the village, and then, one mid-
summer eve,
Came Ned back here as an outcast—out on his
ticket-o'-leave ;
And all of the people shunned him ; the Bradleys
had moved away,
For Jack had squandered the money in drink and
in vice and play.

Poor Eve was up at the doctor's—his housekeeper,
grave and staid ;
There was something about her manner that made
her old flames afraid.
Not one of them went a-wooing—they said that her
heart was dead,
That it died on the day the judges sentenced her
sweetheart Ned.

"Ticket-o'-Leave" they called him after he came back here:

God knows what he did for a living!—he must ha' been starved pretty near.

But he clung to the village somehow—got an odd job now and then;

But, whenever a farmer took him, there was grumbling among the men.

He was flouted like that for a twelvemonth. Then suddenly came a tale

That a man from out of our village had been sick in the county gaol—

Sick unto death, and, dying, he had eased his soul of a sin,

Hoping by that atonement some mercy above to win.

We knew it all on Sunday, for the parson, right out in church,

He wiped away in a moment from Ned the felon smirch.

He told us his noble story; how, following Jack that night,

He had seen him shoot at the pedlar, and rob him and take to flight.

He had seized the gun and the money from the rascal's trembling hand;

Jack fled at the sound of footsteps, and the rest you can understand.

The word that he might have spoken Ned kept to himself to save,

For the sake of the dying father, the pitiful thief and knave.

He knew that the blow would hasten the death of one who had done

More for him than a father—who had treated him as a son;

And so he suffered in silence, all through the weary years,

The felon's shame and the prison, and the merciless taunts and jeers.

Hark! there's the organ pealing. See how the crowd divides!

Room for the best of fellows!—room for the queen of brides!

Look at their happy faces! Three cheers for the faithful Eve!

And three times three and another for Ned, the "Ticket-o'-Leave"!



THE STREET TUMBLERS.

 HANK the lady, Johnny, and give the
money to dad ;
Yes, I'm his mother, lady—don't say,
“ Poor little lad ! ”
For he likes the tumblin' rarely—took to it from the
first.
Accidents?—nothing to speak of—a bruise or two
at the worst.
It's him as draws the money ; he's pretty and looks
so smart,
He gets many a bit o' silver, with a “ Bless your
little heart ! ”
Danger—because his father flings him up like a
ball ?—
He's been at the game too long, ma'am, to let our
Johnny fall.

You'd sooner your child was dead, ma'am, than
leading a life like this?

Come here a minute, Johnny, and give your mammy
a kiss;

Look at his rosy cheeks, ma'am! look at his sturdy
limbs!

Look how his dark eyes glisten! there's nothin'
their brightness dims.

We live in the air and sunshine, we tramp thro' the
long green lanes,

We know where to get good shelter, and we never
have aches or pains.

We're happy we three together as we roam from
place to place,

We should die pent up in cities, for we come of a
gipsy race.

The rough and the smooth together, it isn't so hard
a life.

Yes, I've had my troubles—the biggest, the year I
was mother and wife.

'Twas a hard black frosty winter the year that our
baby came,

The master had sprained his ankle, and hobbled
along dead lame.

He'd had to give up performin', for the agony made
him shriek,
And I had a month-old baby, and illness had left
me weak.
We couldn't do much for a livin', and we weren't
the folks to beg;
The master was fond o' baby, but, Lord, how he
cursed his leg!

We wouldn't go in the workhouse, so we just kept
trampin' on,
Till the last of our little savin's hoarded for months
had gone.
The master he got no better, and I got worse and
worse,
And I watched the baby wastin' as I hadn't the
strength to nurse.
I was cross and low, and I fretted, and I'd look at
the child and think
As p'raps it 'ud be a mercy if the Lord 'ud let it
sink—
Sink and die and be buried before it grew to
know
What a road life is to travel when the luck's agin'
your show.

At last, with the miles of trampin', Jo's leg grew
quite inflamed,
And the doctor who saw it told him if he didn't rest
he'd be lamed ;
You can fancy what that meant, lady, to him as
could lie in the street
And toss a weight up and catch it, and spin it round
with his feet.
Now we couldn't earn a copper, and at last we
wanted bread,
So we had to go to the workhouse for the sake of a
meal and bed.
We had to go to the workhouse, where they parted
man and wife,
And that was the wretchedest time, ma'am, of all
my wand'rin' life.

It's only folks like ourselves, ma'am, as can tell
what artists feels,
When they're treated like common loafers that
tramps and cadges and steals.
It seemed to us like a prison, with all them heart-
less rules,
So we started again, but often I'd stop by one o'
them pools

That lie in a quiet corner, dark and slimy and
still,
And wonder what drownin' felt like—you see I was
weak and ill.
I know it was bad and sinful, but my thoughts
were strange and wild ;
You can pity a homeless mother, who loved her
ailin' child.

I hated the healthy babies I saw in their mothers'
arms,
I'd look at my pale thin darlin' with a thousand
wild alarms,
And think of what lay before us if the master didn't
mend,
And our means of earnin' a livin' had come to a
sudden end.
I envied the sturdy children when I looked at my
poor wee mite.
I sometimes fancy now, ma'am, maybe as my head
weren't right ;
But I never envied another after a certain day,
As Providence gave me a lesson in a wonderful
sort o' way.

It was through your a-sayin' you'd rather your child
was stiff and dead
Than leadin' a life like Johnny, and as put it into
my head
To tell you my bit o' story, and how as I came to
see
It's better to be contented, no matter how bad
things be.
Now look at him yonder, lady—handsome and firm
o' limb;
There isn't a mother in England as mightn't be
proud o' him.
Yet the day as I had my lesson I looked at his poor
pinched face,
And I envied a little creature as came of a high-
born race.

We'd tramped to a country village, and passin' the
village church
Sat down in the porch a minute, for Joe had begun
to lurch
And stagger a bit and murmur, for his ankle was
awful bad;
But we hadn't sat down a second when a beadle
came up like mad,

And ordered us off, and bellowed, and went nigh
black in the face ;
We saw what was up directly, when a big crowd
filled the place,
And carriages full of ladies came drivin' up to the
gate ;
I never saw such a christenin'—'twas the heir to a
grand estate.

We were pushed along by the people, and got
mixed up in the crowd,
And I heard 'twas a countess's baby, for the women
talked aloud.
The great folks filled the chancel—all friends of my
lord the earl's,
For this was the first boy-baby—the others had all
been girls.
I heard that one-half the county would come to that
baby-boy ;
I watched as his grand nurse held him, and I saw
the mother's joy.
Then I thought of the life of pleasure, of the love
and the tender care,
Of the fortune that God had given that white-robed
baby-heir.

Then I looked at my half-starved Johnny, and
thought of his hapless lot,
A lame street-tumbler's baby, by God and by man
forgot.
And my heart was filled with passion as I looked at
the tiny heir,
And thought, "Ah, if only Johnny had future half
as fair!"
I envied my lady countess—no fear had she for her
child;
My eyes were red with weepin'—her proud lips
only smiled,
And I cried in my bitter anguish, "O God, if my
little son
Could have such a fate as Heaven intends for that
pampered one!"

So we stood in that church—two mothers—she
blessed and me accursed,
And my heart was full of envy, when suddenly with
a burst
Of a music loud and joyous the organ filled the
place;
And stoopin', the lovely countess pressed her lips
on her baby's face.

And then—it was all in a moment—I heard a sudden cry,
And a shriek from the lady-mother—then a murmur from low and high.
For the baby-heir to the title, guarded from every harm,
Lay dead in its christenin' garments—lay dead in its nurse's arm !

I rushed from the church that moment, my senses seemed to reel,
And I hugged my poor wee baby, with my hand on its heart to feel
The beatin' that seemed like music—then I clasped it to my breast
And smothered its face with kisses till I woke it from its rest.
Then its eyes looked up so sweetly, like an angel's, into mine,
And I thanked the God of Mercy for a blessing so divine.
For I had my babe—my darlin'—what matter the workhouse bed ?
I could pity the noble lady, whose little child lay dead.

But our luck got round soon after, for I got better
so quick
I was able to dance and juggle, and spin the hat
with a stick ;
And Johnny grew plump and pretty, and learnt to
hold the shell,
To lisp out " Ta " for the pennies, and the master's
leg got well ;
And then when the boy grew bigger he took to the
tumblin' so
That he learnt the tricks directly, and was quite a
part of the show.
Street tumblin' ain't a fortune, but you know how I
came to see
As it's better to rest contented, to be what you've
got to be.





THE ROAD TO HEAVEN.



OW is the boy this morning? Why do
you shake your head?

Ah! I can see what's happened—there's
a screen drawn round the bed.
So poor little Mike is sleeping the last long sleep
of all;
I'm sorry—but who could wonder, after that dread-
ful fall?

Let me look at him, doctor—poor little London
waif!

His frail barque's out of the tempest, and lies in
God's harbour safe;

It's better he died in the ward here, better a thou-
sand times,

Than have wandered back to the alley, with its
squalor and nameless crimes.

Too young for the slum to sully, he's gone to the
wonderland
To look on the thousand marvels that he scarce could
understand.
Poor little baby outcast, poor little waif of sin !
He has gone, and the pitying angels have carried
the cripple in.

Didn't you know his story?—Ah, you weren't here,
I believe,
When they brought the poor little fellow to the
hospital, Christmas Eve.
It was I who came here with him, it was I who saw
him go
Over the bridge that evening into the Thames
below.

*Twas a raw cold air that evening—a biting Christ-
massy frost—
I was looking about for a collie—a favourite dog
I'd lost.
Some ragged boys, so they told me, had been seen
with one that night
In one of the bridge recesses, so I hunted left and
right.

You know the stone recesses—with the long broad
bench of stone,
To many a weary outcast as welcome as monarch's
throne;
On the fiercest night you may see them, as crouched
in the dark they lie,
Like the hunted vermin, striving to hide from the
hounds in cry.

The seats that night were empty, for the morrow
was Christmas Day,
And even the outcast loafers seemed to have slunk
away;
They had found a warmer shelter—some casual
ward, maybe—
They'd manage a morning's labour for the sake of
the meat and tea.

I fancied the seats were empty, but, as I passed
along,
Out of the darkness floated the words of a Christ-
mas song,
Sung in a childish treble—'twas a boy's voice hoarse
with cold,
Quavering out the anthem of angels and harps of
gold.

I stood where the shadows hid me, and peered about
until
I could see two ragged urchins, blue with the icy
chill,
Cuddling close together, crouched on a big stone
seat—
Two little homeless arabs, waifs of the London
street.

One was singing the carol, when the other, with
big round eyes—
It was Mike—looked up in wonder, and said, “Jack,
when we dies
Is that the place as we goes to—that place where
ye’r dressed in white?
And has golding ’arps to play on, and it’s warm and
jolly and bright?

“ Is that what they mean by ’eaven, as the misshun
coves talks about,
Where the children’s always happy and nobody
kicks ’em out? ”
Jack nodded his head assenting, and then I listened
and heard
The talk of the little arabs—listened to every
word.

Jack was a Sunday scholar, so I gathered from what
he said,
But he sang in the road for a living—his father and
mother were dead;
And he had a drunken granny, who turned him into
the street—
She drank what he earned, and often he hadn't a
crust to eat.

He told little Mike of heaven in his rough untutored
way,
He made it a land of glory where the children sing
all day;
And Mike, he shivered and listened, and told *his*
tale to his friend,
How he was starved and beaten—'twas a tale one's
heart to rend.

He'd a drunken father and mother, who sent him
out to beg,
Though he'd just got over a fever, and was lame
with a withered leg;
He told how he daren't crawl homeward, because
he had begged in vain,
And his parents' brutal fury haunted his baby brain.

"I wish I could go to 'eaven," he cried, as he shook with fright;

"If I thought as they'd only take me, why I'd go this very night.

Which is the way to 'eaven? How d'ye get there, Jack?"—

Jack climbed on the bridge's coping, and looked at the water black.

"That there's *one* road to 'eaven," he said, as he pointed down

To where the cold Thames water surged muddy and thick and brown.

"If we was to fall in there, Mike, we'd be dead; and right through there

Is the place where it's always sunshine, and the angels has crowns to wear."

Mike rose and looked at the water; he peered in the big broad stream,

Perhaps with a childish notion he might catch the golden gleam

Of the far-off land of glory. He leaned right over and cried—

"If them are the gates of 'eaven, how I'd like to be inside!"

He'd stood but a moment looking—how it happened I cannot tell—
When he seemed to lose his balance, gave a short shrill cry, and fell—
Fell o'er the narrow coping, and I heard his poor head strike
With a thud on the stonework under; then splash in the Thames went Mike.

* * * *

We brought him here that evening. For help I had managed to shout—
A boat put off from the landing, and they dragged his body out;
His forehead was cut and bleeding, but a vestige of life we found;
When they brought him here he was senseless, but slowly the child came round.

I came here on Christmas morning—the ward was all bright and gay
With mistletoe, green, and holly, in honour of Christmas Day;
And the patients had clean white garments, and a few in the room out there
Had joined in a Christmas service—they were singing a Christmas air.

They were singing a Christmas carol when Mike
from his stupor woke,
And dim on his wandering senses the strange sur-
roundings broke.
Half dreamily he remembered the tale he had heard
from Jack—
The song, and the white-robed angels, the warm
bright Heaven came back.

“I’m in Heaven,” he whispered faintly. “Yes,
Jack must have told me true!”
And, as he looked about him, came the kind old
surgeon through.
Mike gazed at his face a moment, put his hand to
his fevered head,
Then to the kind old doctor, “Please, are you
God?” he said.

Poor little Mike! ’twas Heaven, this hospital ward,
to him—
A heaven of warmth and comfort, till the flickering
lamp grew dim;
And he lay like a tired baby in a dreamless gentle
rest,
And now he is safe for ever where such as he are
best.

This is the day of scoffers, but who shall say that
night,
When Mike asked the road to Heaven, that Jack
didn't tell him right?
'Twas the children's Jesus pointed the way to the
kingdom come
For the poor little tired arab, the waif of a London
slum.





IN THE HARBOUR.

CO for a sail this mornin' ?—This way, yer honour, please.

Weather about? Lor' bless you, only a pleasant breeze.

My boat's that there in the harbour, and the man aboard's my mate.

Jump in, and I'll row you out, sir; that's her, the Crazy Kate.

Queer name for a boat, you fancy; well, so it is, maybe,

But Crazy Kate and her story's the talk o' the place, you see;

And me and my pardner knowed her—knowed her all her life—

We was both on us asked to the weddin' when she was made a wife.

Her as our boat's named arter was famous far and wide ;
For years in all winds and weathers she haunted the harbour side,
With her great wild eyes a-starin' and a-strainin'
across the waves,
Waitin' for what can't happen till the dead come out o' their graves.

She was married to young Ned Garling, a big brown fisher-lad ;
One week a bride, and the next one a sailor's widow—and mad.
They were married one fearful winter, as widowed many a wife.
He'd a smile for all the lasses ; but she loved him all her life.

A rollickin' gay young fellow, we thought her too good for him.
He'd been a bit wild and careless—but, married all taut and trim,
We thought as he'd mend his manners when he won the village prize,
And carried her off in triumph before many a rival's eyes.

But one week wed and they parted—he went with
the fisher fleet—

With the men who must brave the tempest that the
women and bairns may eat.

It's a rough long life o' partin's is the life o' the
fisher folk,

And there's never a winter passes but some good-
wife's heart is broke.

We've a sayin' among us sea folk as few on us dies
in bed—

Walk through our little churchyard and read the
tale of our dead—

It's mostly the bairns and the women as is restin'
under the turf,

For half o' the men sleep yonder under the rollin'
surf.

The night Kate lost her husband was the night o'
the fearful gale—

She'd stood on the shore that mornin' and had
watched the tiny sail

As it faded away in the distance—bound for the
coast o' France,

And the fierce wind bore it swiftly away from her
anxious glance.

The boats that had sailed that mornin' with the fleet were half a score,
And never a soul among 'em came back to the English shore.
There was wringin' o' hands and moanin', and when they spoke o' the dead
For many a long day after the women's eyes were red.

Kate heard it as soon as any—the fate of her fisher-lad—
But her eyes were wild and tearless; she went slowly and surely mad.
“He isn’t drowned,” she would murmur; “he will come again some day”—
And her lips shaped the self-same story as the long years crept away.

Spring, and summer, and autumn—in the fiercest winter gale,
Would Crazy Kate stand watchin’ for the glint of a far-off sail;
Stand by the hour together and murmur her husband’s name—
For twenty years she watched there, for the boat that never came.

She counted the years as nothin'—the shock that
had sent her mad
Had left her love for ever a brave, young, handsome
lad;
She thought one day she should see him, just as he
said good-bye,
When he leapt in his boat and vanished where the
waters touched the sky.

She was but a lass when it happened—the last time
I saw her there
The first faint streaks o' silver had come in her jet-
black hair;
And then a miracle happened—her mad, weird
words came right,
For the fisher lad came ashore, sir, one wild and
stormy night.

We were all of us watchin', waitin', for at dusk we'd
heard a cry,
A far-off cry, round the headland, and strained was
every eye—
Strained through the deep'nin' darkness, and a boat
was ready to man—
When, all of a sudden, a woman down to the surf-
line ran.

'Twas Crazy Kate. In a moment, before what she
meant was known,
The boat was out in the tempest—and she was in
it alone.
She was out of sight in a second—but over the sea
came a sound,
The voice of a woman cryin' that her long-lost love
was found.

A miracle, sir, for the woman came back through
the ragin' storm,
And there in the boat beside her was lyin' a lifeless
form.
She leapt to the beach and staggered, cryin',
"Speak to me, husband, Ned!"
As the light of our lifted lanterns flashed on the
face o' the dead.

It was him as had sailed away, sir—a miracle sure
it seemed.
We looked at the lad and knowed him, and fancied
we must ha' dreamed—
It was twenty years since we'd seen him—since
Kate, poor soul, went mad,
But there in the boat that evenin' lay the same
brown handsome lad.

Gently we took her from him—for she moaned that
he was dead—

We carried him to a cottage and we laid him on a
bed;

But Kate came pushin' her way through and she
clasped the lifeless clay,

And we hadn't the heart to hurt her, so we couldn't
tear her away.

The news of the miracle travelled, and folks came
far and near.

And the women talked of spectres—it had given
'em quite a skeer;

And the parson he came with the doctor down to
the cottage quick—

They thought as us sea-folks' fancy had played our
eyes a trick.

But the parson, who'd known Kate's husband, as
had married 'em in the church,

When he seed the dead lad's features he gave quite
a sudden lurch,

And his face was as white as linen—for a moment
it struck him dumb—

I half expected he'd tell us as the Judgment Day
was come.

The Judgment Day, when the ocean they say 'ull
give up its dead ;

What else meant those unchanged features, though
twenty years had sped ?

* * * * *
That night, with her arms around him, the poor
mad woman died,

And here in our village churchyard we buried 'em
side by side.

'Twas the shock, they said, as killed her—the shock
o' seein' him dead.

The story got in the papers, and far and near it
spread ;

And some only half believed it—I know what
you'd say, sir; wait—

Wait till you hear the finish o' this story o' Crazy
Kate.

It was all explained one mornin' as clear as the
light o' day,

And when we knowed we were happy to think as
she'd passed away,

As she died with her arms around him, her lips on
the lips o' the dead—

Believin' the face she looked on was the face o' the
man she'd wed.

But the man she'd wed was a villain, and that she
never knew—
He hadn't been drowned in the tempest; he only of
all the crew
Was saved by a French ship cruising, and carried
ashore, and there
Was nursed to life by a woman—a French girl,
young and fair.

He fell in love with the woman—this dare-devil
heartless Ned,
And married her, thinkin' the other had given him
up for dead.
He was never the man—and we'd said so—for a
lovin' lass like Kate;
But he mightn't ha' done what he did, sir, if he'd
known of her cruel fate.

'Twas his son by the foreign woman, his image in
build and face
Whose lugger the storm had driven to his father's
native place—
'Twas his son who had come like a phantom out of
the long ago.
On the spot where Kate had suffered God's hand
struck Ned the blow.

We learnt it all from the parson when Ned came
over the waves
In search o' the son he worshipped—and he found
two fresh-made graves.
Dang!—what was that? Sit steady! Rowed right
into you, mate!
I forgot where I was for a moment—I was tellin'
the gent about Kate.



MISCELLANEOUS.





MISCELLANEOUS.

CHRISTMASSING A LA MODE DE SLUMOPOLIS.



SAW a lady up a court that leads to
Drury-lane,
She held her head between her hands,
and seemed to be in pain.

She'd two black eyes, a broken nose, and bruises
half a score,
She sat and moaned upon a step beside an open
door.
“What's up?” I said; “you seem in grief.” She
answered with a sigh,
“We've been a-keepin' Christmas, sir, and Bill has
blacked my eye.”

“Your nose is damaged very much—you’ve lost a dozen teeth,
I see your head is sadly cut, your battered hat beneath;
Your face is very wan and white, excepting where it’s black,
And, by the way you twist about, it’s clear you’ve pains that rack.”
“It’s nothin’, sir,” she answered me, with quite an angry frown;
“We’ve been a-keepin’ Christmas up, and Bill has knocked me down.”

“Why don’t you seek your little home, and bandage up your head,
And bathe your face, and wash yourself, and lie upon the bed?
You must be cold upon the step, in such a shocking state—
Come, come, poor soul, go home at once, and seek your lawful mate.”
“I can’t go home,” the woman growled, “the landlord’s turned us out—
We’ve been a-keepin’ Christmas, sir—our things is up the spout.”

“Well, where’s your husband?” then I said; “his
place is by his wife;
He shouldn’t leave you in the streets to risk your
precious life.
He’s blacked your eye and cut your head, but still
he is your spouse,
And ought at least to remedy the fruits of his
carouse.”
“My husband, sir,” the woman sobbed, “in quod
he’s got to stop,
He’s been a-keepin’ Christmas, sir, and jumpin’ on
a slop.”

“Your children, surely, where are they—you are
not quite alone?
A little boy, or little girl—come, don’t sit there and
moan.
Where are your children, what of them, they can’t
be drunk at least,
Or overcome, like you and Bill, with this the
Church’s feast?”
“I had a child,” the woman cried, “poor little
thing—it’s dead—
I’d been a-keepin’ Christmas, sir, and laid on it in
bed.”

I left the woman with a coin—it went, no doubt, in
gin—
And thought of how this time of joy is made a time
of sin ;
How homes are ruined, limbs are maimed, and help-
less children killed,
While prison cells and workhouse wards with mad-
dened fools are filled.
I thought of Christ's sweet carnival to heathen rites
“demeaned,”
And Christmas made the harvest-time of Drink—
hell's fiercest fiend.





MIDSUMMER DAY.

“  WELCOME the summer with tabor and pipe,
The time when the fruit is deliciously ripe.

O, gather the rosebuds and let us be gay,
For this, O my darling, is Midsummer Day.”

So sang the poor poet; but when he uprose
And over the window-sill wobbled his nose,
The shades of his brow were decidedly gray,
For it poured and it hailed on his Midsummer Day.

He donned his goloshes and shouldered his gamp,
He packed up his oilskin that kept out the damp;
He put on his ulster and went on his way
To sing to his sweetheart of Midsummer Day.

The wind blew nor'-easters, the heavens were black ;
The lightning was flashing, the thunder went crack ;
The hailstones were falling the poet to flay—
He paused and he muttered, “Blow Midsummer
Day !”

At noon it grew dark, and, confused by the cold,
He fell o'er a snowball some urchin had rolled.
The blast numbed his senses and helpless he lay,
A victim to sweethearts and Midsummer Day.

Next morn, when the parish authorities go
With their carts to remove the superfluous snow,
They shovel him up and they bear him away,
A frozen-out poet on Midsummer Day.





A GREAT COUNTRY.

(A PATRIOTIC SONG, BY AN ENGLISHMAN. WITH
A CHORUS, BY HIS CONSCIENCE.)

 HERE is no land like Albion, no people
like her sons ;
There's wealth, there's plenty everywhere,
and swift our warm blood runs ;
Our tables groan with luxuries, and welcome is our
guest—

CONSCIENCE :

Though, truth to tell, you always treat the richest
ones the best.

Our good Lord Mayor keeps open house, and dines
in regal state,
He feasts the lions when they come, the wealthy
and the great;
With lavish hand on foreigners we squander heaps
of gold—

CONSCIENCE :

And leave your poor in agony to perish in the cold.

We've charities we cannot count, since legion is
their name,
The largesse of our City men is trumpeted to fame;
Our hospitals are noble piles, where skill with
kindness vies—

CONSCIENCE :

There's one of them I've read about—I think they
call it Guy's.

Here justice is not bought or sold; here innocence
we guard—
No paid official, as abroad, on prisoners is hard.
No mouchard plots to ruin men, no victims justice
claims—

CONSCIENCE :

Don't mention Habron, Frost, and Smith—they
might be awkward names.

Here suff'ring finds a ready friend to answer its appeal;

Here every woman has a heart for women's woes to feel;

Here people meet to guard the rights of nigger and of Turk—

CONSCIENCE :

Here shop-girls toil twelve hours a day, and die from over-work !





LATE FOR DINNER.



OEM and prose is the life of man,
There's a little of each in our measured
span,

Whether we're saint or sinner.
So thinks the lady, who sits behind
As his worship rides through the biting wind,
And gives her a bit of his lordly mind
Because they are late for dinner.

The poem was all in the long ago,
When he rode through many a mile of snow—
In the days when he sought to win her
'Twas a kiss at the end of his journey then
Now he's cross as the crossest of married men
Because—O, theme for a poet's pen!—
Because they are late for dinner.

Ah, me! how poetry fades to prose
As the eyes show signs of "the feet of crows,"
 And the hair of the head grows thinner.
For one of his lady's glances soft
He has risked his neck, has his Worship, oft,
And now she thinks, as she's bumped aloft,
 He's risking hers for his dinner.





HARK! THE HERALD ANGELS SING.



HE church is quaint, and carved, and
olden;

The sunlight streams in wavelets golden,
This Christmas morn,

Through stained glass scenes from Bible stories,
On ancient knights whose sculptured glories
The aisle adorn.

The rays are shed in chastened splendour
On many a dead and gone defender

 Of Church and Crown ;

On Lancelot, the brave Crusader,

And Guy, who slew the French invader,
 And saved a town.

The manor lords in line unbroken
Rest here begirt with sign and token

 Of ages past ;

And dames and maidens, proud and stately,
Lie here with folded hands sedately,

 And eyes shut fast.

Among their tombs the sunlight lingers
Then halts between the anthem singers,
And warriors grim.

For there, 'midst many a warlike relic,
Fair children sing the song angelic,
Christ's birthday hymn.

In rev'rie wrapt, I pause and listen,
I watch the darting sunbeams glisten
On floor and wall ;
Then pass from dead to living graces,
And on the children's happy faces
In splendour fall.

This song of peace—these gentle voices,
These glad young hearts that life rejoices,
My fancy thought,
Are dearer homage to the Master
Than all the Church's foes' disaster
These dead knights wrought.

Gone are the days of gloom and error,
Love's sceptre breaks the rod of terror
In our fair isle.
And as the children sing His message
Of Peace on Earth the joyful presage,
They win God's smile.



TO A PAIR OF BOOTS.

(BY A WIFE KICKER.)



PAIR of boots! O pair of boots! my
beautiful, my thick!

Why do I hang you in my hall? Is't but
a madman's trick?

Nay, nay, my own, my polished ones, he's sane
whose rapture flows

In limpid verse to sing the praise of soles and heels
and toes.

It was with thee, my beautiful, when Jane grew
cross and old,

I quick dissolved the nuptial knot without a waste
of gold;

One kick from thee and silently her crusty spirit
fled—

Six weeks I mourned for her in gaol and then I
Nancy wed.

And when my Nancy, like her sex, grew jealous in
her mind,
What crisp persuasive eloquence I used in thee to
find!
If she to strike within her heart allowed suspicion's
roots,
Her head was mine to strike as well—I struck with
thee, O boots!

You hushed her nagging tongue at last, and sent her
off to sleep—
Six weeks of mourning once again had I in gaol to
keep;
Then Sally was my charming bride—poor Sal you
settled soon—
You might, O boots, have let us have a longer honey-
moon.

O pair of boots, the married bard on thee this verse
bestows.
No “nisi” lurks between thy heels—they’re “abso-
lute” thy toes.
For discontented married men you sit in Hannen’s
seat—
No wife need be upon their hands who’ve you upon
their feet.



A TRAVELLER'S TALE.

(SUGGESTED BY SOME SUMMER EXCURSIONS.)



T was a boy—a London boy—with matches
in his hand,
Who begged of me to buy a box one
evening in the Strand.
I always talk to ragged boys, it's just an author's
whim ;
They often have a tale to tell—that's why I talked
to him.

“I wants a tanner more!” he said, while counting
up his coin,
“Our treat's to-morrow mornin', sir—we're goin' to
Bouloin.
We has ‘dejooner’ board the ship, and ‘deenay’
on the shore,
But still one wants a bob to spend—I wants a
tanner more!”

“Boulogne!” I cried; “good gracious, boy! I must have heard you wrong;

To what school, may I ask you, does your Excellence belong?”

“The ragged school, o’ course!” replied that box of matches youth—

“D’ye think we ain’t a-goin’ there?—I’m tellin’ yer the truth !

“Why, mother’s in the workus, sir; last year they had their treat—

They went as far as Hamsterdam, to what they calls a *feet*;

And father, what’s a imbecile, was took right up the Rhine—

That’s where our treat’ll be next year—I hear as ‘ow it’s fine.

“My sister goes to Sunday school; her treat ’ll be Mount Blank—

Six hundred on ‘em goin’, sir, with banners all in rank !

I wish I went to Sunday school, to have a treat like that—

I see myself a-top of it, with paper round my ’at !

“The Mission what’s in Leman-street, as takes the
gutter kids,
Towards their summer ’oliday ’as got no end of
quids;
I hear as on a monster ship their flag will be un-
furled—
They’re goin’ to take them gutter kids a woy’ge
around the world!”

I gave the boy what coin I had, and left him with a
frown,
For I was not a gutter boy, and had to stay in
town.
And as that summer night in vain I tried asleep to
drop,
I thought—Where will this growing taste for foreign
travel stop?





LOUIS NAPOLEON.

BORN, MARCH 16, 1856; DIED, JUNE 1, 1879.



USH, Friend and Foe! No more his
name
Shall raise a thought of France's shame
Or patriots fret,
Nor shall he shine, a wandering star,
To guide the hopes of friends afar—
That star has set!

Launched on a sunlit ocean's breast,
The zephyrs curl no wavelet's crest—
On speeds the barque.
Adrift too soon on stormy sea,
Black rise the billows on the lee :
The night grows dark.

Safe moored a while 'neath alien skies,
In friendly port the frail craft lies
 With flapping sail ;
Then speeds once more across the main,
And dares the billows yet again
 And courts the gale.

O, loving eyes that from the shore
Scan the wild waste of waters o'er,
 God help thee now !
The barque that sped long leagues away
On barbarous coasts lies wrecked to-day—
 Wrecked keel and prow.

Hush, Friend and Foe ! and let two lands,
Sisters in sorrow, link their hands
 Across his grave.
Forget all else, O France, to-day,
Save that the exile far away
 Was young and brave.



A DEADLY WEAPON.



HE Devil came up to the earth one day,
And he called on a friend, in a casual
way,

For a quiet ten minutes' chatter.

The name of that friend I had best conceal,
And I do it more willingly since I feel
That really it doesn't matter.

They'd a whisky hot—I'm inclined to think
That whisky's the Fiend's particular drink—
And then they began debating
A scheme for further attacks on man—
A diabolic, infernal plan—
Which the Devil was meditating.

“I want to invent,” said the Fiend, with a smile,
“A weapon that’s cowardly, fierce, and vile,
For madmen and rogues to play with;
More deadly, more brutal, more cruel, more keen
Than dynamite, dagger, infernal machine,
Or anything Christians slay with.

“I want to improve on the poisoned shaft,
On the hellish weapons of heathen craft,
On Europe’s most skilled invention;
It must beat the bullet, outstab the knife,
Its wound must torture while lingers life.
Is there anything you can mention?”

The friend went straight to his desk and took
A weapon that lay by his blotting-book,
And held it above him, crying :
“Here’s the deadliest weapon that woundeth men !
Can the Devil improve on a poisoned pen ?”
Said the Devil : “I don’t mean trying.”

He took up his hat, and he said “Good-bye”
With a gleam of joy in his fearful eye,
As he thought of the scribes inhuman
Who make of a gift that the gods might own
The deadliest weapon the world has known,
And stab at both man and woman.



THE STREET GALLERY.

(AS IT IS TO BE WHEN "ART" STEPS IN.)

OME, walk abroad this lovely morn, my darling, let us view
The pictures on the hoardings, love—I
hear they all are new.
No more the hideous poster mars the beauty of the
scene;
No more the eye offended is with flaring red and
green.

Ah, here's the spot, the well-known spot, where
once I used to see
A vulgar man, with brawny chest, as naked as
could be ;
And yonder sat a big baboon, who in a frying-
pan
Surveyed himself with such a grin, you gazed at
him and ran.

They've disappeared, you see, my love, and left no
single trace,
But lovely pictures, framed and glazed, now fill the
vacant space ;
The liver pad advertisement from Leighton's magic
brush
Now raises but a pleasant smile where once it raised
a blush.

To see the hoardings come the folks in thousands
from the West—
“The Monkey and the Frying-pan” is reckoned
Millais' best ;
While Orchardson, with matchless art, grips fast his
laurels still—
How chaste is that design of his, “The Antibilious
Pill” !

Here Tadema once more has won from fame a
laurel wreath,
That girl is his who holds a brush and cleans her
pearly teeth ;
That's Storey's choice interior, “The Joys of Wash-
ing Day,”
The “washing powder” folks for that a monarch's
ransom pay.

Sol Hart for Cooke and Maskelyne designs that
headless wretch ;
You'd be surprised, dear, if you knew the price Sol's
horrors fetch.
Burne-Jones, the Grosvenor deity, that " Hair Re-
storer " 's by—
Observe the lady's pallid cheeks and melancholy
eye.

But come away, my lady love, the crush is growing
great,
To-day the Press will come to view, to carp, to
gush, and slate.
Let's take the passing omnibus, content that we
have seen
High art on hoardings take the place of vulgar red
and green.





AT THE PIT'S MOUTH.

RISCA, JUNE 15, 1880.



FRINGE of weeping women and a crowd,
The curious idler and the kindly neigh-
bour,
A man or two in grief, with head low bowed ;
A band of heroes stripped for gallant labour.

All these above—below a hundred men
Caught in and crushed—a hundred murdered
miners,
All shapeless lying—mangled out of ken—
A ghastly subject for the graphic “liners.”

We shudder for a little as we read,
Then shake our heads, and sighing say, "How
awful!"

Murmur, perchance, there seems a growing need
To make this slaughter more or less unlawful.

For nine whole days the nation shows its grief ;
Sends a subscription—token of its sorrow.
The miner dead, we grant his wife relief.
The miner living may be killed to-morrow.

"Death takes his toll on labours such as these ;
No human skill can ward off such disasters."
Who says so lies—Death only takes his fees
When the door's opened to him by the masters.

O England ! with your lips for aye apart
Mouthing the Scriptures ; let your faith sink
deeper.
'Tis yours to check this slaughter—ask your heart.
'Twas Cain who cried, "Am I my brother's
keeper?"



ODE AND PAID TO KAHU,

THE FIGHTING CHRISTIAN OF TAPITAWA.



MY poor Kahu—my green Kahu,
Who twice five hundred heathen slew,
To make them Christians like yourself,
And not for bloodshed or for pelf,—
How could you think a savage had
The right to make the heathen glad—
To give their souls the Christian creed
On spears that made their bodies bleed?
This sort of thing is only right
In Christian chieftains who are white.

You've doubtless read, mayhap been told,
How white kings never fight for gold ;
But when they filch a neighbour's land
The motive is intensely grand.
We English never fight unless
It is that we the foe may bless
By teaching them our laws and ways—
'Tis all for good that England slays.
So much the stranger's good we prize,
We kill that we may civilise.

'Tis true we carry fire and sword
'Gainst many a far-off savage horde.
'Tis true we've taken far and wide
Our neighbours' land on every side.
And when the natives we have slain
Ourselves have filled the void again.
But always has 't been understood
We did it for our neighbours' good.
We found they were a wicked race,
And killed them off by Heaven's grace.

But you, Kahu—O shocking, sad !
Your conduct is extremely bad,
To go and strew the land with dead
That Christian precepts might be spread ;

The right to do such deeds you lack—
I fear, Kahu, you'll get the sack.
The journals here across the sea
Are cross with you as cross can be.
To slaughter men in Heaven's name
Is Christian England's private game.





PARLIAMENTARY ETIQUETTE.



OU may call a Prime Minister "humbug"
and "fool,"

You may toss the reporters an apple,
You may take off your waistcoat to keep yourself
cool,

You may kneel as you would in a chapel.
You may sing comic songs, you may stand on your
head,

You may air your most impudent notion,
You may make Mr. Speaker an apple-pie bed,
If you only conclude with a motion.

You may put up your thumb till it touches your
nose,
Then spread out your delicate fingers ;

You may threaten a member with beatings and
blows,
And make all your epithets stingers.
You may do, you may say, what the dickens you
please,
You may puff up pill, plaster, or potion ;
You may even suggest that the Speaker has fleas,
If you only conclude with a motion.





THE RESIGNATION OF BISMARCK.

(A PROPHECY.)



HE sun rose red o'er all the world, the
 moon had screamed and flown,
The wind was hushed, the ocean still—
 the awful news was known.

With troops of special constables the capitals were
 lined,
For in the sky these words appeared, “Prince Bis-
 marck has resigned.”

Vesuvius erupted fast, the rivers burst their bounds,
There was a run on all the banks for several million
 pounds;
Ten thousand treaties then were drawn the potent-
 ates to bind,
And kingdoms rocked themselves to sleep, for Bis-
 marck had resigned.

Then mothers seized their babes and fled to undiscovered spheres—

A yawning earthquake swallowed up the British House of Peers;

The Fatherland went off in pops, no pieces could they find,

And earth flew off to endless space, for Bismarck had resigned.

That night the true New Zealander arrived with carpet bag,

And on the ruins of a world he stuck his native flag;

And there alone he smokes his pipe, and whispers to the wind—

“It’s very lonely here at nights, now Bismarck has resigned.”

Perchance in other, happier days, when people could not read,

Less fatal the result had been of Bismarck’s dreaded deed;

Perchance a weaker race of men would mutter,
“Never mind!

The world may just as well go on, though Bismarck
has resigned.”



MAY.



T is May, it is May, and the nightingale
sings,
With the tic-douloureux and a cold in its
head,
And a plaister of mustard on each of its wings,
And the cuckoo, alas ! is confined to its bed.

It is May, it is May, and the trees were in leaf,
All dressed and awaiting their bridegroom, the
sun ;

But the rowdy east wind came along like a thief,
And he towzled and tumbled them every one.

It is May, it is May, and the poet with glee
Would nectar imbibe in the woods he adores ;
But his drink for the moment is camomile tea,
Which the doctor informs him will open his pores.

It is May, when the primrose and violet peep
From the banks that abound in our beautiful
lanes.

It is May, when a cold makes us snore in our sleep,
And the winds bring neuralgia and toothache and
pains.

It is May, it is May, when the world should be fair,
The fields and the meadows be varied in hue ;
But the colours most needed our health to repair
Are the draught that is black and the pill that is
blue.

It is May, it is May, when the wind's in the east,
And our livers, alas ! are decidedly queer.
O false month of Flora, to man and to beast
It's a *Floorer* instead that you're bringing, I fear.





AT OUR DOORS.



WOMAN dying, starving, cold, unknown,
Crying for bread outside the workhouse
late—

Crying for bread, and getting—what?—a stone—
A stone to die on at the workhouse gate.

Over the seas go ships of English gold
To clothe the savage, feed the lazy Turk ;
Here lay our sister hungry in the cold—
To feed the English is not England's work!

Out on the Poor Law sham!—the heartless jest
'That makes a mock of Want's despairing cry ;
That in the cloak of Charity sits drest,
And robs the rich and leaves the poor to die.

O, England, blush! and now, for very shame,
Strike at this system, rotten to the core.
Until you do, 'tis yours alone the blame,
And each starved pauper dies at England's door.



FORGOTTEN.

BY A FLURRIED POINTSMAN.



SAY, you boy, from the infant school,
As barely can read or write,
Leave off a-larkin' and playin' the fool—
You must give me a hand to-night.

I know you've got to enter the trains,
But just keep a sharp look out,
For something or other has mixed my brains,
And I can't remember nowt.

I've passed the 'spress and the goods as well,
And the parly—the through and slow—
But I'm bothered, my boy, if I can tell
If there's anything else to go.

There's some trucks on the siding waiting to shunt,
And a passenger nearly due,
And I fancy there's something just in front,
By a whistle as just now blew.

There's the 10.15 ! and the lights are red—
I'm blest if I don't feel queer.
The line's all right, and there's nowt ahead :
You can give 'em the signal "Clear!"

I'm awfully queer in my head to-night—
A crash ! eh, what does it mean ?
Good God ! I'd forgotten that engine quite—
And I've settled the 10.15.





THE BURIALS BILL.

[“This bill involves the most serious consequences to the clergy of England, and may imperil the existence of the National Church.”
—*The Bishop of Lincoln in the House of Lords.*]



OME hither, little Timothy, and sit upon
my knee,
And gaze upon the wilderness where
Churches used to be ;
And listen to the narrative prepared for little lads,
Of how the Church called National was ruined by
the Rads.

You've heard about Dissenters, boy, those very
wicked men,
Who wandered from the Bishop's flock and sought
another pen ;
They hatched a vile and wicked plot to bring the
Church to grief :
It is a very woful tale—get out your handkerchief.

There was an arch-conspirator, Lord Selborne was
his name—
The Radicals they put him up to play their artful
game;
He framed a bill which made it law that when Dis-
senters die
Their most infectious bodies may among dead
Churchmen lie.

Then Lincoln's Bishop, holy man ! with pale and
ashen face,
He wept aloud and cried “Forbear our churchyards
to disgrace !
Let one Dissenter's body touch our consecrated
ground,
And England's Church lies doomed for aye, and
ruin spreads around.”

His warning words all idly fell on irreligious ears :
The law was passed, and justified the holy Bishop's
fears.
They brought a dead Dissenter's corpse within the
churchyard gate ;
And now look round, dear Timothy, and see the
Church's fate.

The moment his polluting dust had touched our
sacred soil
Volcanic flame the churchyard filled, the earth was
on the boil.
A stream of lava swept the tombs before it in a
heap,
The lightning played about the skies, the thunder's
voice was deep.

The church, though built of brick and stone, now
trembled like a child,
And seemed to shrink as though it felt its honour
was defiled.
The walls went first, the steeple next, and then the
pulpit fell,
And all the pews went down in fear, and lay about
pellmell.

Through all the land that fatal day the churches felt
the blow,
St. Paul's Cathedral was among the very first to go ;
The dead Dissenter's body wrought the mischief
prophesied,
And soon our old Established Church was ruined far
and wide

The Church of England, Timothy, is ruined now for
 aye,
Dissenting chapels reign supreme throughout the
 land to-day,
And Wordsworth, whose prophetic eye foresaw the
 prospect drear,
With Mother Shipton now divides the laurels of the
 seer.





A VALENTINE.



STOOD at Rimmel's window, and I saw
that there were signs
That the festival approaching was the
bold St. Valentine's ;
There were lots of little Cupids in a cloud of dainty
lace,
They were podgy in the stomach, they were chubby
in the face !
And a dicky-bird I noticed, in its beak a little ring,
Just the bird to drop the present in a lady's hand
and sing.
Then I suddenly remembered that the worthy
Mrs. D.
Last year had very kindly sent a valentine to me.

So I stepped up to the counter, and a smiling
maiden brought
All the best of the collection, thinking one of them
I sought.
"For a sweetheart," said she, coyly, "here's a
beautiful design";
'Twas a fan with painted roses, and the legend, "I
am thine."
"No, it isn't for a sweetheart, but my wife," I shyly
said.
Back that damsel put the boxes, and she tossed her
little head,
Crying, "Oh, I beg your pardon!" while she smiled
at the mistake;
"That's the sort of thing you want, sir—it's the
cheapest one we make."





AN AWFUL CHARACTER.



HERE'S a terrible character loose in our
land,

Which murder his favourite game is ;
All methods, apparently, come to his hand ;
Be patient, and learn what his name is.
He kills little babies all over the shop,
Each day in a river one thrown is ;
In the list of ill-doers he stands at the top,
And his title "a person unknown " is.

When coroners sit upon corpses galore
Of people who killed on the sly are,
The guilt of one person is well to the fore,
For our " Roberts " so terribly fly are.

The verdict is always conclusive enough,
And the facts in a nutshell all shown are ;
The peelers can prove in ways ready, if rough,
These the deeds of “a person unknown” are.

He’s *au fait* at the coal-cellar mystery plan,
His victims unfound may a lot be ;
His methods are many to shorten life’s span,
And a fool at the game he can *not* be.
He prepares for his job, and performs it in peace,
Where by nobody heard can a groan be ;
What a man to defy all our clever police
Must this terrible “person unknown” be !





SWEET JULY.



IS the month of sweet July,
And the thunderstorms go by;
Waterproofs 'tis best to try,
If you'd keep your carcase dry
In the month of sweet July.

'Tis the month of sweet July,
When the maiden fair and shy
From the meadow has to fly,
For the mud is ankle high
In the month of sweet July.

'Tis the month of sweet July—
First we freeze and then we fry,
Tempest laden is the sky,
And the weather's all awry
In the month of sweet July.

'Tis the month of sweet July,
But it might be month of Guy.
Little fogs come on the sly,
And the poets tell a lie
When they call it "sweet" July.

'Tis the month of sweet July,
But I'm weary, and I cry :
Why, O weather, tell me, why
Are you rogue of deepest dye,
Making Beauty sob and sigh,
And man look with jaundiced eye
On his damp terrestrial stye ?—
Can't you swear an alibi ?
For your credit's sake deny
That you're really here, July.





THE RIVER DEMON.



HE river was bright in the morning sun,
And lazily went the row-boats by;
“O, O!” quoth the Demon, “I’ll have
some fun,”
As he snorted, and tossed the wave-
lets high.

Lazily floating by sweet green banks,
The boats went past with their laughing crew;
Then the Demon was ripe for his rowdy pranks,
And he sought some ill for his hands to do.

He scattered the boats, and he tossed the stream,
Till the beautiful banks were thick with mud;
He turned to a panic Love’s noonday dream,
For his demon soul was athirst for blood.

He robbed the Thames of its quiet grace,
He filled the air with his noisome breath,
And the trembling rowers gave him place,
For they knew that his touch was the touch of
death.

Hurrah for the Demon that gaily rides
In triumph o'er Thames's silver breast
With the stain of blood on his cruel sides—
Hurrah! hurrah for the River Pest!





THE POETS ON THE MARRIAGE WITH A DECEASED WIFE'S SISTER BILL.



T comes as a boon and a blessing to men
When your missus as was disappears
from your ken.

—ANONYMOUS.

When from the wife you get a parting benison,
Her sister will console you.—ALFRED TENNYSON.

When weary, worn, and nigh distraught with grief,
You mourn Maria in your handkerchief,
Rush, rush to Aunty, and obtain relief.

AN F.S.A. OF OVER 100 YEARS.

Beneath the spreading chestnut tree
The village smithy stands—
With Mrs. Smith it's all U P,
She's gone to other lands.

But he goes on Sunday to the church,
And hears her sister's voice ;
He leaves his scruples in the lurch,
And she makes his heart rejoice.
The morning sees his suit commenced,
The evening sees it done—
Next day the Parson ties the knot,
And Pa and Aunt are one.

—LONGFELLOW.

It's a sin, says the Bishop, says he,
With her sister the wife to supplant ;
But I answers him, makin' so free,
Mr. Bishop, I sez, as it *aunt*.

—COMIC JOURNAL.

O blood-bitten lip all aflame,
O Dolores and also Faustine,
O aunts of the world worried shame,
Lo your hair with its amorous sheen
Meshes man in its tangles of gold ;
O aunts of the tremulous thrill,
We are pining—we long to enfold
The Deceased Wife's Fair Relative Bill.

—SWINBURNE.



THE LOST CORD.

(WITH A THOUSAND APOLOGIES.)



EATED one day in a carriage,
I was frightened and ill at ease,
For a fellow, behaving wildly,
Was up to his drunken sprees.

I knew not if he was playing,
Or what I was doing then,
But I pulled the cord like winking
While the lunatic shrieked "Amen."

It rattled against the ceiling
As I clasped it in my palm,
Then it broke and fell on the cushion,
Where it lay in a holy calm.

It startled the next compartment,
On the lunatic's nerves it jarred ;
It reached the length of the carriage,
But it never reached the guard.

It may be a grand invention
At the distant guard to get ;
But I've tried it in twenty cases
And I've never succeeded yet.





A PLUMBER.

(AN EPISODE OF A RAPID THAW.)



THE dirty snow was thawing fast,
As through the London streets there past
A youth, who, mid snow, slush, and ice,
Exclaimed, "I don't care what's the price—
A Plumber!"

His brow looked mad, his eye beneath
Was fixed and fierce—he clenched his teeth.
While here and there a bell he rung,
But found not all the shops among
A Plumber.

He saw his home, he saw the light
Wall paper sopped—a gruesome sight.
He saw his dining-room afloat,
He cried, "I'll give a fi'pun note—
A Plumber!"

“O stop the leak!” his wife had said;
“The ceiling’s cracking overhead.
The roaring torrent’s deep and wide”—
“I’ll go and fetch,” he had replied,
“A Plumber.”

“Pa ain’t at home,” the maiden said,
When to the plumber’s house he sped.
He searched through London, low and high,
But nowhere could he catch or spy
A Plumber.

Next morn, a peeler on his round,
A mud-bespattered trav’ller found,
Who grasped the “Guide to Camden Town”
With hand of ice—the page turned down
At “Plumbers.”

They brought a parson to his side,
He gently murmured ere he died—
“My house has floated out to sea,
I am not mad—it’s not d.t.—
It’s Plumbers.”



THE MUFFIN BELL.



HEARD it when a babe in arms, I heard
it when a child ;
And when I caught its music sweet I
know I always smiled.

In later years its jocund sound would o'er my senses
steal,
And sweet remembrance bring me back of many a
pleasant meal.

Before mine eyes a picture rose of happy after-
noons—

When jam was brought to deck the board, and also
silver spoons ;
Of crumpets piled before the fire, and muffins
smoking hot,
The hissing urn, and mother's best electro-plated
pot.

I see the merry muffin-man pass down the dark'ning street,
And still his bell can charm me, though his wares I dare not eat !
I never hear its tink-a-tink but pictures fancy sees
Of English hearths and English homes and happy English teas.

And shall they stay the muffin-bell, and stop its merry tongue,
That speaks of homely English ways alike to old and young ?
With foolish laws Britannia's soul, alas ! is sorely vex't :
If quietly we yield the bell, they'll seize the muffins next.

No ! by the teas our fathers ate, and by the muffins brown
Our mothers talked their scandal o'er and criticised the town—
No ! by the crumpet, sweet and crisp, and pikelet loved so well,
Ye shall not fine our muffin-man, or stop the muffin-bell !



HIS WIFE.

 HERE'S a gentleman up at the top of our
street,
And he's got such a thick pair of boots
on his feet,
And he's kicking a lady, and taking her life:
But we won't interfere—for the lady's his wife.

Let us stand in a crowd, as we've nothing to do,
And watch her face showing the black and the
blue.
O ! He's going to finish her off with a knife !
Give him plenty of room. Don't you see?—she's
his wife.

What a strange thing to do! See; in fury he tries
To bite off her ears and to gouge out her eyes.
But it's merely domestic, this marital strife;
And we won't interfere between husband and wife.

Hullo! What was that? O, how shocking to see!
There's a small boy of seven destroying a tree!
Let us stop him at once, for this mischief is rife.
Here we *can* interfere—for a tree's not a wife.





COMET B, 1881.



OPEN my window wide to-night, and I
cast my gaze on high,
Where the stars are out, and the Milky
Way, and lots of the smaller fry.
And over my head, with a fan-shaped tail, I as plain
as a pikestaff see
The comet that came in 'Eighty-one—the comet
that's known as B.

O, Comet B, with the fan-shaped tail, that came in
this year of grace,
Some wonderful thoughts have come to me, as I
gaze on your shining face.
Look well, look well, on the earth below from your
perch in the starlit sky,
For lots of things will have changed, I guess, before
you again come by.

I've read of you in the sage's page, and there
astronomers say
It may be the year three thousand odd ere you come
again this way;
And all the mortals who see you now will be under
the green, green sod,
And even their names will have passed away in the
year three thousand odd.

O, what will you see in that wondrous year when
you shine upon English ground!
With the babble of what un-English race will the
ancient spots resound?
Will mighty cities stretch far and wide, and the isle
be black with men,
Or will ruin reign in the Old-World spot where the
wild beast makes its den.

Go, comet of eighteen eighty-one! Sail on through
the trackless spheres,
And come again when your journey's done, in
seventeen hundred years.
Good-bye, old fellow! I wave my hand, and I give
you a parting nod,
For I sha'n't be here when you come again, in the
year three thousand odd.



THE PEELER IN ARMS.

 T was a gallant peeler, he was weaponed
to the teeth ;
His dirk was in his stocking, and his
sword was in its sheath ;
He'd a pistol for garrotters, and a blunderbuss as
well,
And to storm an Irish alley he had also shot and
shell.

He'd a cannon at the corner, and a powder maga-
zine
Was erected for that peeler on the nearest bit of
green ;
He had dynamite provided when he went upon his
beat,
And a stand of arms kept ready at the top of every
street.

With his fierce moustaches twirling and his helmet
on his head,

Soon he filled the British public with a lively sense
of dread.

He would order orange women to "move on" in
awful tone,

And would prod them with his "bayonet" if un-
willingness was shown.

If a boy was selling matches where the trams and
'buses stop,

You would hear a little pistol give a pretty little
pop;

For the arabs were the targets for the practice of
the force,

Lest when aiming at a robber they should chance
to kill a horse.

Now, this military peeler, when the snow was on
the ground,

Took the "Please to sweep your doorway" on his
early morning round.

If a householder neglected his commandment to
obey,

He would up with his revolvers and politely blaze
away.

Soon were heard the signs of mourning, and the
streets grew thin of folk—
Half the populace had perished through this “armed
policeman” joke;
Then the peelers having weapons, and no enemy to
slay,
Had a go at one another, and fought all one summer
day.

When the sun had set in glory all the ground was
strewn with gore,
And a whole unchopped policeman was a memory
of yore;
Then the populace remaining came and gathered
up the bits—
From that day no armed policemen have gone
shooting peaceful cits.





THE BOLD BAD MAN.



AM a dreadful character, in vice I go the pace;
I'll give a start to any man and win an easy race;
I've galloped helter-skelter through the catalogue of crimes,
Committed theft and perjury at least a dozen times.
I've had my fling at forgery, at felony, and fraud,
And when I go marauding, you can bet I *do* maraud;
But I never condescended, though of crime I've made a tour,
To the greatest crime in Christendom—the crime of being poor.

And that's how I keep from detection ;
If you'll give it a moment's reflection
 You all will agree
 In this precept with me,
That it's awfully wrong to be poor.
 For the rich oft may sin,
 While the poor get run in,
O, it's awfully wrong to be poor.

I've been a bank director, and the bank it went to
 smash,
For we'd played at speculation with a lot of poor
 folk's cash ;
I've got up little swindles in the shape of silver
 mines,
And sold the juice of cabbage stalks as port and
 sherry wines.
I've manufactured butter out of railway grease and
 fat,
But I go to church on Sundays, and I always smell
 my hat ;
My balance at my banker's makes my dodges safe
 and sure—
The safest sort of roguery's to rob and cheat the
 poor.

And that's how I keep from detection ;
If you'll give it a moment's reflection
 You all will agree
 In this precept with me,
That it's safest to swindle the poor.
 The rich make a row,
 But the poor folks we cow,
So it's safest to swindle the poor.

If my little game were murder, still I'd keep my
 fingers clean ;
I could bribe my poorer brothers—monarchs do the
 same, I ween ;
When their neighbour's land kings covet, what's
 about the price they pay ?
Don't they send men out to rob him at a bob a
 head a day ?
Bother *guilt* upon your conscience !—if you've gold
 inside your purse,
You can be as bad as I am, and, in fact, a little
 worse.
Wealth can make the wicked honoured, and give
 beauty to the boor,
But you mustn't be a villain if you happen to be
 poor.



THE REAL REMEDY.

FORCE is no remedy for Irish ills,
The livers there won't yield to leaden
pills;
When people starve, and that tongues may not
wag,
The food we stop their mouths with is a gag;
No general's needed Ireland's wrong to right,
But just a few *left tenants* who won't fight.







